

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BELIZE 0249

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR US GT UK BH

SUBJECT: BELIZE

REF: STATE 083363

1. SUMMARY. CONGEN BELIEVES A MORE ACTIVE ROLE FOR THE U. S. IN SEEKING A SETTLEMENT TO THE UK-GUATEMALA DISPUTE MAY BE INDICATED IN THE PRESENT SITUATION, OUR HOPE THAT THE DISPUTANTS MIGHT FIND A SOLUTION NOW SEEMS UNLIKELY TO BE FULFILLED, AND THE STATUS QUO SEEMS LIKELY TO CONTINUE DETERIORATING WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF EVENTUAL CONFLICT INCREASING. CHANCES THAT PREMIER PRICE MIGHT AGREE TO A TERRITORIAL CESSION IN EXCHANGE FOR INDEPENDENCE ARE EVALUATED NEGATIVELY. END SUMMARY.

2. VIEWED FROM LIZE, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER US SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT ADOPT A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN REGARD TO UK-GUATEMALA DISPUTE WOULD SEEM TO TURN ON A) THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF U. S. INTERESTS INVOLVED AND THE EFFICACY OF PRESENT U. S. POLICY IN FURTHERING THESE INTERESTS.

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3. ABSTRACTING FROM PARM (NOW IN PREPARATION), THE PRINCIPAL U.S. INTEREST IN BELIZE IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH OUR RELATIONS WITH THE UK, WITH GUATEMALA AND WITH THE SPANISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA STAND TO BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE UK-GUATEMALA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE. OUR RELATIONS WITH THE BLACK CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE THIRD WORLD COULD ALSO CONCEIVABLY BE AFFECTED. CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN BELIZE WOULD POSE SPECIAL PROBLEM

FOR U. S. INTERESTS.

4. ALSO TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT ARE U. S. INTERESTS IN GUATEMALA WHICH OUR EMBASSY THERE HAS IDENTIFIED.

5. THE BASIC ASSUMPTION OF OUR POLICY OF NONINVOLVEMENT IN THE BELIZE DISPUTE HAS BEEN THAT THE PARTIES THEMSELVES STOOD THE BEST CHANCE OF ARRIVING AT A SOLUTION. IT NOW APPEARS UNLIKELY THIS WILL HAPPEN. MEANWHILE, THERE ARE REASONS WHY WE MUST NOW EXPECT THE SITUATION TO WORSEN: SOME OF THESE ARE:

A) THE GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA, NOW FREED FROM THE RESTRAINTS IMPOSED BY THE U. S. MILITARY PROCUREMENT PROGRAM CAN BE EXPECTED TO ACQUIRE NEW WEAPONS TO COUNTER THE RECENTLY INCREASED BRITISH MILITARY CAPABILITY. THE UK MAY THEN BE FACED WITH THE NECESSITY OF FURTHER AUGMENTING ITS MILITARY CAPABILITY HERE, AND THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS NATO FORCES.

B) BECAUSE OF THIS, AND BECAUSE OF PMG'S FISCAL PROBLEMS, PRESSURES ON THE BRITISH TO GET OUT OF BELIZE SEEM LIKELY TO INTENSIFY IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. INDICATIONS ARE THAT HMG MAY NOW BE CONSIDERING HOW BEST TO ENABLE BELIZE TO BECOME INDEPENDENT IN THE ABSENCE OF GUATEMALAN ACQUIESCENCE. AN UNSTABLE ARRANGEMENT MIGHT BE THE OUTCOME.

C) PREMIER PRICE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE BELIZE PROBLEM, AND IF THE CURRENT UK-GUATEMALA TALKS REACH AN IMPASSE, WHICH NOW SEEMS LIKELY, THE PREMIER CAN BE EXPECTED TO BROADEN HIS SECRET

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SEARCH FOR GUARANTORS OF BELIZEAN SECURITY; THUS, AN EVENTUAL ROLE FOR CUBA CANNOT BE EXCLUDED.

D) THE OIL EXPLORATION PROGRAM NOW UNDERWAY IN SOUTHERN BELIZE PROBABLY ELIMINATES ANY CHANCE THAT PREMIER PRICE COULD MAKE ANY TERRITORIAL CESSION TO GUATEMALA, EVEN IF BELIZE'S ONLY HOPE OF INDEPENDENCE DEPENDED ON IT. THUS, THE OUTLOOK IS FOR CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF THE STATUS QUO; MEANWHILE THE CHANCES OF EVENTUAL CONFLICT ARE PROBABLY INCREASING. IN SHORT, SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS WHICH OUR POLICY IS SUPPOSED TO FURTHER ARE NOT BEING FURTHERED; INSTEAD, THESE INTERESTS ARE BEING INCREASINGLY JEOPARDIZED. ERGO, AS SEEN FROM BELIZE, OUR POLICY OF NONINVOLVEMENT SEEMS INCREASINGLY INADEQUATE, AND A MORE ACTIVE US ROLE SEEMS INESCAPABLE.

6. AS TO WHETHER PREMIER PRICE WOULD AGREE TO CEDE TERRITORY SOUTH OF THE MOHO RIVER TO GUATEMALA, THE WEIGHT OF THE EVIDENCE SEEMS TO BE THAT HE WOULD NOT, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HAD ONE RECENT INDICATION TO THE CONTRARY. MY CONCLUSION DERIVES FROM

A) PRICE'S OWN PAST RHETORIC ("NOT ONE SQUARE CENTIMETER"); B) HIS OWN PARTY'S DERISIVE ATTACK ON SUGGESTION APPEARING IN OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER THAT GOB CONSIDER A TOKEN CESSION; C) PRICE'S DECLINING DOMESTIC POLITICAL SUPPORT; D) PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD INDEPENDENCE, GUATEMALA AND CESSION ISSUE (BELIZEANS, EXCEPT FOR A FEW ZEALOTS LIKE THE PREMIER, TEND TO THINK OF INDEPENDENCE IN RATHER ABSTRACT, DISTANT TERMS. THEIR DESIRE TO SEVER THE COLONIAL TIE WITH BRITAIN IS NEITHER UNANIMOUS NOR URGENT. IN CONTRAST, THEIR INTEREST IN NATIONAL SECURITY AND THEIR FEAR AND ANTIPATHY TOWARD GUATEMALA ARE VISCERAL, URGENT, AND EMOTIONAL. HENCE, RATHER THAN CEDE TERRITORY TO GUATEMALA IN EXCHANGE FOR INDEPENDENCE, MOST BELIZEANS WOULD PROBABLY RATHER LEAVE THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE NOW. E) PRICE WOULD PROBABLY HATE TO LOSE FACE AMONG HIS THIRD WORLD COHORTS BY AGREEING TO CEDE BELIZEAN TERRITORY IN EXCHANGE FOR INDEPENDENCE AFTER GETTING UNGA ENDORSEMENT OF HIS COUNTRY'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. F) THE EXPLORATION CONTRACT AWARDED A CONSORTIUM OF OIL COMPANIES LAST YEAR INCLUDE ALL THE COASTAL AREA SOUTH OF THE MOHO

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RIVER AND A SIGNIFICANT AREA OF THE ADJACENT WATERS.

7. THE "RECENT INDICATION TO THE CONTRARY" REFERRED TO IN PARA 6

ABOVE OCCURRED DURING A FEB 21 CONVERSATION (MEMCON SENT TO ADDRESSEES) IN WHICH PRICE SEVERAL TIMES REFERRED TO GUATEMALAN DEMANDS FOR ALL TERRITORY SOUTH OF MONKEY RIVER AS "TOO MUCH." THIS MAY HAVE BEEN A) A GENUINE SIGNAL THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER A SMALLER CESSION, B) UNINADVERTENCE OF NO SIGNIFICANCE, OR C) A DESIRE TO SAY SOMETHING HE THOUGHT WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR, ASSUMING, AS HE DOES, THAT WE ARE SYMPATHETIC TO GUATEMALA'S DEMANDS. THE LATTER WOULD BE MY GUESS.

GAWF

NOTE BY OCT: DISSIMINATION COORDINATED WITH SS/O PER.MR.MACFARLANE.

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